

RECOMMENDED FUNDING PRIORITIES FOR JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

As the General Assembly explores the best and most impactful programs to pursue under the Justice Reinvestment Act, we recommend the following for funding from the Performance Incentive Grant.

○ **Nondiscriminatory Affordable Housing Programs with Full Range of Wraparound Services**

Stable housing is an important component to help ex-offenders become more engaged in community services and less likely to recidivate. Unfortunately, incarcerated persons transitioning back into the community – many with behavioral health disorders – often face challenges finding a safe place to live. Housing programs should include transitional housing, recovery residences and permanent supported housing. Funding should be prioritized for housing programs that offer full wraparound and transitional services, such as linkages to social services, employment, parenting classes, transportation, public benefits, behavioral health treatment and case management. Additional funding should be used to educate property managers on appropriate terminology, housing policies, and discriminatory practices related to people with behavioral health needs and criminal records.

○ **Community Based Pre-Release and Post-Release Programs**

Research shows that criminal justice involvement among those with behavioral health disorders can be reduced with effective treatment, psychiatric rehabilitation, and social services such as supported housing and employment. These programs increase the likelihood of success post-release and prevent recidivism.

Maryland has experience with pre-release programs that improve health outcomes for people with mental health and substance use disorders. One such initiative – the Second Chance Program – operated between April 2013 and June 2015, achieving the following outcomes:

- 100 percent of participants referred to community-based treatment kept their first behavioral health appointment and a majority (82%) remained engaged in services.
- After three years of implementation, the recidivism rate was 18 percent, compared to 48 percent for individuals post-release not participating in the program.
- At the time of release, 100 percent of participants secured housing.

Performance Incentive Grant funding should be directed to these types of community-based programs and the Oversight Board should recommend that the State make case management a reimbursable service under Medicaid.

○ **Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) Programs**

Assertive Community Treatment is an evidence-based, proactive outreach service that improves outcomes for people with serious mental illness who may also have a substance use disorder, and who are at-risk of psychiatric crisis and hospitalization. FACT teams incorporate a forensic component into the service delivery to address the unique needs of individuals with criminal backgrounds with the aim of reducing recidivism.

FACT recipients have fewer arrests, convictions and jail time. Performance Incentive Grant funding should be utilized to expand these services across Maryland.

○ **Programs To Divert People with Behavioral Health Needs Away From Incarceration**

The state should prioritize investment in proven criminal justice diversion programs. These require strong collaboration between law enforcement and behavioral health professionals. Data collection within these programs will also help identify overlap and gaps for future policymaking and possible initiatives. Examples of effective programs include:

- Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)
- Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT)
- Crisis Response Teams (CRT)
- Miami-Dade Criminal Mental Health Project (CMHP)

○ **Job Training Programs with Employer Partnerships and Job Placement Services**

Ex-offenders with steady employment are much less likely to recidivate than those unable to find work. Funding should prioritize programs that provide needs and interest assessments, job placement services and demonstrate engaged employer partnerships.

The most effective employment programs for individuals with criminal records use placement managers to identify employers willing to hiring ex-offenders. Programs should provide a range of behavioral health and wraparound services, occupational certifications, and additional training and educational opportunities.

○ **Technologies to Expand Access to Behavioral Health Treatment**

Individuals with behavioral health disorders must be able to access the care they need before they interact with the criminal justice system. With the current behavioral health provider workforce shortage, that means we should prioritize funding new technologies to expand access to treatment. Telehealth is a viable option for communities with a dearth of providers. Other tools include mobile applications that connect the user to a peer support community, private and secure messenger apps that send appointment reminders and allow for easy communication with providers, and other self-care platforms.

○ **Adequate Workforce**

A vital component throughout the aforementioned funding priorities is the sustainability of staff and operational costs. Viable and effective programming cannot exist without it. Funding the operations that support existing and new programs must be considered in order to offer the services and resources that help divert individuals from the criminal system or assist individuals with criminal records transitioning back into the community. This could include grants that support hiring personnel for these targeted resources.